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NEUTRALIZING THE DISINHERITED--SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF UNDERSTANDING THE POOR.

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MEMBERS OF THE DOMINANT SOCIETY IN THE UNITED STATES, BOTH SOCIAL SCIENTISTS AND LAYMEN, PERCEIVE THE POOR IN WAYS WHICH ALLOW THEM TO RESOLVE THE ANXIETY THEY EXPERIENCE WHEN THEY RECOGNIZE THAT THE POOR LIVE A LIFE WHICH IS OSTENSIBLY UNLIVABLE. ONE MODE OF PERCEPTION, WHICH UNDERLIES SEEMINGLY SOPHISTICATED VIEWS, AND IS FOUND IN THE ATTITUDE OF THE POOR THEMSELVES, IS THE "MORALIZING" SENSE THAT THE POOR DESERVE THEIR STATUS BECAUSE THEY AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT ARE INHERENTLY FLAWED. THERAPY FOR THIS "FLAW" INCLUDES PUNISHMENT, CONTROL, OR "REDEMPTION." THE "MEDICALIZING" PERSPECTIVE VIEWS THE POOR AS "SICK" PERSONS LIVING IN A PATHOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT, AND ADVOCATES PSYCHOTHERAPY AND THE ACTUAL REMOVAL OF CHILDREN FROM THE ENVIRONMENT. ACCORDING TO THE "NATURALIZING" PERSPECTIVE, THE POOR ARE GENETICALLY INFERIOR AND MUST BE EUGENICALLY WEEDED OUT OF SOCIETY, CONTROLLED THROUGH A CASTE SYSTEM, OR LEFT ALONE. IN CONTRAST, THE "APOTHEOSIZING" PERSPECTIVE VIEWS THE POOR AS HEROIC, AND SOCIETY AS VICTIMIZING THEM. ADVOCATES OF THE "NORMALIZING" PERSPECTIVE MAINTAIN THAT THE POOR, GIVEN A CHANCE, ARE LIKE "ORDINARY" PEOPLE, AND STRESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE POOR RATHER THAN ALTERATIONS IN THE DOMINANT SOCIAL STRUCTURE. BECAUSE THESE DIAGONSES OF POVERTY CAN AFFECT SOCIAL AND POLITICAL POLICIES THEY SHOULD BE MORE PHENOMENOLOGICALLY VALID BEFORE THEY ARE ACTED UPON. (LB)

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NEUTRALIZING THE DISINHERITED

SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF UNDERSTANDING THE POOR

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Introduction

The central existential fact of life for the lower class, the poor, the deprived and discriminated against ethnic group, is that their members are not included in the collectivity which makes up the "real" society of "real" people.[1] They are not considered, and often do not consider themselves, quite part of the regular moral system taken in common as ordinary and regular society. They may not be allowed, or may not be able, to participate in those activities, or with those people who are defined as integral to regular society. For this reason such groups can quite legitimately be considered "disinherited" in the sense that no valued and taken-for-granted place is made for them and their children in the society; they are on the outside looking in. Yet at the same time their activities are subject to surveillance and control by society in such a way that they are not truly autonomous to make a way of life of their own.

All of this is something that in a vague way everybody knows--the man in the street knows it as well as the social scientist. To the extent that members of regular society confront the reality of a disinherited group, they must develop some understanding which "explains" the fact that there are people among us who are not part of us. Social science views of these phenomena inevitably grow out of the more common sense views. They are more elaborated and more logically organized and more sophisticated versions of the different common sense understandings which develop about disinherited groups. At the same time, to the extent that social science views derive from reasonably adequate theory and

empirical research, they are not "merely" more elaborated, logically organized and sophisticated versions, but do indeed have a higher level of truth content than common sense views even though they are not fully independent of these views.

When we seek to examine the various common sense/social science understandings of poverty, we are engaged in a study of what deviance experts call the "labeling process."[2] In order to cope with the presence within the boundaries of society of individuals who are not a regular part of it, a society's members develop "labels" that signify the moral status of the deviant and carry within them a folk etiology and diagnosis, and often a folk therapy. The social scientist inevitably imports these folk understandings into his own work. They yield both understanding and misunderstanding for him.

David Matza has neatly summarized the wide range of conceptions of the "disreputable poor" which social commentators have brought to bear historically in their recurrent "discovery" of the poor.[3] These labels--be they "hard-to-reach," "problem family," "multi-problem family," "lower-lower class," lumpenproletariat, "spurious leisure class," or "pauperism"--all can and do exercise tremendous influence on the intellectual's grasp of the problems of poverty, and by extension also influence the kinds of policies that are imagined whenever a "war on poverty" comes into being.

In a recent article Bertrand Beck undertakes to analyze "welfare as a moral category."[4] What he has to say about the place of welfare and welfare recipients in the folk understandings of the social system

(Dare I say "ethnosociology"?) can be applied more generally to the situation of all those who are in the position of the disinherited. Beck argues that in every society individuals have a conception of how their system operates and why it seems to operate that way that parallels but is not identical with an adequate sociological understanding of the social system. Thus he observes:

> Participants in the system, like scientific observers of it, postulate the structural coherence of most, if not all, the institutionalized roles. Like scientists, they have an interest in formulating a theory about the basic principles of this coherence. The folk theory of the participants will be called the Theory and is distinct from the sociologist's account of the structural coherence of the system of institutionalized roles. In fact, one of the most interesting sources of latent patterns should be in the gap between the publicly accepted Theory and the actual structure found by an observer. The Theory generates as its main result an object of public definition which we have called a "way of life," but which might be called in a more abstract vein the Theoretical structure, or even the ideal structure. In this paper, it will be called the structure. Another important result generated by the Theory is a model of conduct with respect to the Structure. The belief that the structure contributes to an orderly and predictable set of relationships among the persons who make up the population to a large degree explains its existence, according to the Theory. The implications of this notion are far-reaching and constitute the basic building blocks out of which is constructed a folk model of conforming behavior and of the significance, explanation, and necessary treatment of deviations from conformity.

Beck goes on to observe that given the folk Theory and Structure members of society inevitably run up against the fact that at least some individuals and groups do not conform to them--that in fact the actual structure of the society does not always make a place which conforms to the folk Theory and Structure for each and every one of its members. This problem can be solved by fission (those who do not fit move out and form their own systems) or by the simple expedient of eliminating those who cannot

be given a place in the system. But a situation short of this is more common and leads to a perplexing paradox for those who uphold the system:

> Those who are residual to the Structure will have to be provided with some defined place within it. They will have to be placed in some category created especially for them in order to bring them back within the system and allow the system to deal with them. What is paradoxical is that the role to which they are assigned is that of the roleless. In a sense being outside the Structure is a structural position.

Thus, new, gerry-built elements must be added to the Theory and Structure which give content to the role of the roleless and the structural position of being outside the structure. This is done through a variety of labels and common sense understandings which these labels connote. But these additions to the Theory and Structure inevitably have a fugitive character because the very necessity to formulate them challenges the Theory. They tend to be shot through with contradictions and at the same time obsessively elaborated in order to somehow rationalize the fact that the folk understandings break down when confronted with the hard reality that some of the individuals who live in the society's territory cannot be placed in the idealized system. (Perhaps the most striking example we have of obsessive elaborations as efforts to rationalize such contradictions is the three centuries long effort on the part of Southern slavery and Jim Crow advocates to formulate an adequate white supremacy ideology.[5])

In the light of observations such as these it becomes apparent that the poor embarrass everyone--the establishment is inevitably embarrassed, but the poor are no less embarrassing to those who seek concerted revolutionary action from the disinherited--thus the Marxist category

of lumpenproletariat is required to separate the honest revolutionary hero from the dregs who cannot be mobilized. In any developed radical ideology--that is, one that has gone on long enough to have to seek to resolve some of its contradictions--the disinherited seem inevitably to become segregated in ideology as they are in fact.

Perplexity and Anxiety Engendered by Disinheritance

We are accustomed to thinking of ordinary, common sense understandings of the disinherited, as well as more sophisticated ideological and social science understandings, as having the psychological function of coping with the guilt feelings members of regular society develop because they know they derive various kinds of gains and gratifications from the existence of the disinherited. However, I think there is a more profound core than guilt which motivates the search for an understanding of the disinherited. For the individual who cannot avoid knowing about poverty and how the poor cope with their lives, there is at the most personal level a profound sense of perplexity and anxiety that arises when the regular person confronts his observations of how the poor live or even when he turns over in his mind various unattractive stereotypes about them.[6]

The evidence available to regular people from experience with the disinherited and stereotypes about them leads to a deeply felt belief that "I would not live that way; I could not live that way." The basic human response to the situation of the disinherited, that is, leads to a common sense judgment that the disinherited way of life is "unlivable."

And this in turn leads to a perception of the situation of the disinherited as somehow unreal. But yet there they are, they do not lie down and die; they survive and they multiply. The original perception that their lives are unlivable is therefore called into question and being called into question produces a great deal of anxiety. The disinherited are but yet they cannot be.

The calling into question of a perception which itself has important functions results in a highly unstable cognitive situation--an instability which the individual is strongly motivated to resolve. I think there are two very common kinds of resolutions (there may be others) which run somewhat along the following lines:

Initial Perception: "I could not live the way they live, but yet they seem to be able to do so--that is, as I understand my humanity I could not tolerate the experiences that they seem to have as I perceive those experiences to be. I cannot match my perception of normal humanity and of their conditions in any way that produces an understanding of their lives as livable."

THEREFORE . . .

Solution 1: "Perhaps they do not actually live that way; perhaps my perception of their life circumstances is incorrect."

OR . . .

Solution 2: "Perhaps they are not they. That is, perhaps they are not persons such as I. It is not possible to speak of us as "we" human beings. Since I am human and I have decided that humans

(that is, persons like me) cannot live the way they live and survive, yet they do seem to live that way, then perhaps they are not human."

Five Perspectives on the Disinherited

If this is true, then we are justified in considering specific diagnoses of the condition of the disinherited as representing various amalgams of versions of: "They don't really live that way." and "They are not human." From both the popular literature dealing with problems of the disinherited and from the social science literature, as well as from inevitable participant observation during discussions of these matters by lay people and by social scientists, I think I can discern five different perspectives which are brought to bear on understanding the situation of the disinherited. In each perspective one can discern beliefs concerning the humanness or personality of disinherited persons and also beliefs having to do with the way of life of disinherited persons somewhat apart from their individual personalities.

Before discussing in detail these five perspectives, I want to note that with one possible exception there are highly convincing portraits of each one of these points of view in both the popular and the social science literature. That is, for each of these perspectives one can find in the literature or in conversation developments of the perspective that carry a great deal of face validity, characterizations that only an observer who is intent on discovering error will be unaffected by. This suggests that each perspective may capture a certain amount of

truth of the condition of the disinherited. But, by the same token, portraits hewing closely to any one of these views often leave one unsatisfied both because it is easy to think of exceptions and because the characterizations tend to have the quality of making their subjects seem to be, in Harold Garfinkel's phrase, "conceptual boobs."

These five conceptions I will call the moralizing, the naturalizing, the medicalizing, the apotheosizing, and the normalizing perspectives. Four of them seem to me to represent combinations of two basic dichotomies about the situation of the disinherited, and one represents instead an effort to rise above these dichotomies. The relationship between these two dichotomous variables and the five perspectives is indicated in Figure 1. I suggest that the poor can be characterized as either weak or potent, and they can be evaluated as virtuous or as lacking in virtue; as evil, if you will. The combination of a perception of the disinherited as evil or potent leads to what I will call the moralizing perspective; of virtious and potent leads to the apotheosizing perspective; of evil and weak to the normalizing perspective. The fifth perspective, naturalizing, comes about as a result of an effort to rise above these value judgments of virtuousness vs. evil and weakness vs. potency, and to develop a value-free conception that leans heavily on an impersonal natural science perspective. (Of course, in this latter case, we are often able to see ample evidence that the explanation is neither value-free nor impersonal.)

FIGURE 1

FIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE POOR

The poor are evaluated as . . .	The poor are characterized as . . .	
	Weak	Potent
Virtuous	Normalizing	Apotheosizing
	Naturalizing	
Evil	Medicalizing	Moralizing

Let us now examine each one of these perspectives for its content in terms of what it stipulates about the personalities and way of life of the disinherited and then in each case move on to a consideration of the policy implications, the "therapy," that seems to fit most easily with the diagnosis. However, a caveat is in order here. I think it is very likely that there is no necessary connection between the perspective as diagnosis and statements about the etiology and therapy that fit most easily with each perspective. Unique combinations can and do occur; probably a very careful analysis of the particular views of holders of a given perspective on all three issues would be necessary to specify the connection between etiology, diagnosis and therapy. Thus, there may or may not be a predictable connection between a cataloging of causes of disinheritance--economic exploitation, political subjugation, ethnic discrimination, etc.--and any one particular perspective.

Similarly, I think that there are often "left" and "right" versions of most of these perspectives. This becomes clear in some of the controversies that revolve around questions of poverty war diagnosis and poverty war therapy. It seems to me that very often the perspective is more important to the holder than are his politics. One can sometimes detect alliances or at least parallel kinds of attack by left and right poverty warriors against a perspective that they find threatening for reasons that have little to do with basic political orientation.[7]

Finally, it should be noted that some of the most important functions, or at least effects, of these different perspectives have to do with their role as social commentary quite apart from a specific therapy

designed to deal with the poor. Each perspective allows secondary gains, so to speak, from the particular poverty diagnosis that is offered. Like other kinds of secondary gain, these may come to loom larger than the basic function of resolving perplexity and anxiety.

Versions of poverty, poverty perspectives, can become important to their users as a way of fighting battles with one's enemies in regular society quite apart from their function for resolving the cognitive problems raised by becoming aware of poverty, or their rational functions of leading to the development therapies for dealing with society's poverty problem. For example, social workers often use versions of poverty as a way of fighting a battle which poses them as welfare professionals against other kinds of professionals, particularly against the dominance of business institutions in American society. Similarly, white radicals often use poverty perspectives as a way of getting even with and irritating those they consider "square" and conventional. (And in turn, they are often put down by Negro radicals who see through their impotence to really do anything about the white squares.)

More recently, we have observed the possibility for black radicals to use their particular perspective on the disinheritance of the Negro poor as a way of retreating from anatagonistic engagement with white society, or of retreating from co-optation into the white-dominated Negro middle class.[8]

Finally, everyone must by now be aware of the possibility some poverty perspectives allow for attenuating the commitment of liberals to the political goal of incorporating the disinherited into the society,

and for rationalizing the metaphysical pathos of such liberals which maintains that nothing can be done, or that whatever can be done can only be done very, very gradually.

It should be apparent that the disinherited are particularly well-suited to serve as raw material for the formulation of perspectives that can serve these functions for inter-institutional battles within the dominant society because they do not have the power to deny others the possibility of using them in these ways. Thus, the disinherited become "fair game" for anyone who has a grudge against any of their many enemies, be it a radical who wants épater les bourgeoisie, a welfare professional who wants to assert his virtue as against that of the entrepreneur, or a liberal establishmentarian who fights a two-front battle against radical and Republican alike.

1. The Moralizing Perspective.--This is perhaps the oldest point of view brought to bear in understanding the disinherited. In this perspective a moral flaw is perceived in the disinherited or in their environment which explains the fact that they live unlivable lives--that is, they are able to live in this way because they are morally different from regular people. The focus of the moralizing perspective can be on the individual disinherited person or on a quality of their environment (although, of course, the two are generally very much linked).

a) The sinners. In the moralizing view the disinherited are afflicted with the mark of Cain. They are meant to suffer, indeed must suffer, because of their moral failings. They live in a deserved hell

on earth. So long as they do not renounce their immorality and allow themselves to be saved they must continue in the status of the disinherited. If they do renounce their immorality they may come into God's inheritance as members of the regular community.

b) An environment of sin. Regardless of the moral status of particular individuals, the disinherited live in a world in which immorality is the rule. Though innocent at birth, they do not stay this way long because of the seductions and temptations around them.

c) Therapy. Perhaps the most pressing claims for social action that stem from the moralizing perspective have to do with demands for punishment and control of the immorality lest it "infect" and "attack" the rest of the community.[9] Beyond punishment and control the therapies that go most naturally with this view will emphasize efforts to redeem and "save" the disinherited sinners through evangelist movements which may start either spontaneously within the community of the disinherited or may be imposed from outside.

It would be difficult to underemphasize the extent to which the moralizing perspective undergirds seemingly more sophisticated views of poverty. It would also be difficult to underemphasize the extent to which the views of a great many of the disinherited themselves about their own conditions and about the conditions of those around them are informed by a moralizing perspective. Manifestations of this point of view are readily apparent at the informal level in the ways lower class people talk about themselves and their peers and more formally in the ideologies of fundamentalist churches, and even more strikingly by movements such as the Black Muslims.

2. The Medicalizing Perspective.--The medicalizing perspective is perhaps the most direct descendant of the moralizing one in the sense that it is relatively simple to replace the condition of "sin" with that of "sickness." In the medicalizing perspective the explanation of how the disinherited live unlivable lives lies in the understanding that normal people and normal social patterns have somehow been subjected to pathological processes. The disinherited and their way of life may be human, but sick. As before, particular commentators will place primary emphasis on the sickness of individuals or the sickness of the environment.

a) Psychopathologizing. This perspective predicates that the disinherited live the way they do because their psyches are pathologically formed. This pathology can be taken to refer most directly to the personality--there will be emphasis on mental illness, sociopathic behavior, apathetic or depressive orientations, disturbed child rearing practices etc., etc. More recently, as psychology has become increasingly intrigued with mental processes rather than with personality processes more generally, emphasis has shifted to the pathological character of cognitive development, to trained incapacities, to the absence of certain kinds of experiences that leave the child cognitively underdeveloped, and the like. In both cases the disinherited live as they live because of the way things are put together inside their heads. The human material from which they sprang has in the course of life been blunted and malformed; from this pathology results behavior which is destructive both to the individuals involved and to people around them. In this way the human

material of the disinherited ends up as different from that of the rest of us, although it started out the same.

b) The pathological environment. Here the emphasis is on the sickness of the social environment. In contrast to the psychological emphasis on individual personality and mental processes, there is a sociological emphasis on social disorganization and pathology. Participation in this sick world, though in the extreme sociological view it may be considered not to rub off on the individual personality, nevertheless leads to unhappy and disorganized lives. The disinherited are seen as falling in not with bad company, but with sick company. No matter how the individual tries he is constantly interfered with by a disorganized community which frustrates his constructive goals, and tends to replace them with deviant ones.

c) Therapy. In terms of "therapy" the implications of the first, more psychological, view are fairly straightforward. There is emphasis on psychotherapy and counseling for the disturbed personalities involved, or on the development of compensatory education and training programs that somehow repair cognitive damage. The choices this perspective lead to tend to systematically highlight the importance of clinic approaches, and also individual diagnosis.

With respect to the pathological environment therapy will emphasize the building of a less pathological community of the disinherited. There will be emphasis on developing an organized, as opposed to disorganized, community "infrastructure" and on gaining community involvement in new institutions of various kinds that direct energies in a constructive as opposed to a destructive direction.

At the more extreme levels, however, where the perception is of a community that is hopelessly disorganized, the suggested solution may be rather that of removing at least the children from the disorganizing environment--as in the underground suggestion one hears over and over again from unselfconscious, usually non-professional, commentators on the war on poverty to the effect that all poor children should be removed from their families and communities and put into government run kibbutzim where they will learn proper ways. Indeed, at one point OEO was said to be considering the construction of large camps modeled somewhat along the lines of the Job Corp to which whole families would be assigned for resocialization.

3. The Naturalizing Perspective.--Here there is a great effort to gain evaluative distance from the situation of the disinherited. The emphasis is on discovering a "natural" explanation of the fact that the disinherited live lives that the observer feels are unlivable. Science is to provide the answer in an impersonal, value-free way by the application of what is known scientifically about humans and their behavior.

a) Biological determinism. Some thirty and forty years ago the emphasis on biological differences was probably the major alternative to the moralizing perspective. Great efforts went into demonstrating that the disinherited, particularly darker racial groups but also the white disreputable poor, were biologically different and inferior to regular people. This inferiority explains the fact that the disinherited are able to live in a way that regular folk cannot live. The disinherited

were biologically not up to standard, were genetically inferior in one way or another. This was indeed unfortunate, and one should deal humanely with such people as one might with domestic animals, but it was believed unnatural to expect them to perform in regular ways and it was unwise (because of the stress on their inferior constitutions) to provide them with the regular rewards that society had to offer.

The major thrust of biological determinism as an explanatory perspective in this area had to do with intelligence--the effort was to demonstrate inferior brains on the part of those who are not part of regular society--but there was also a congeries of other traits that had to do with a presumed greater insensitiveity to pain, greater ability to tolerate manual labor, lesser control of the emotions, etc. that was believed to be genetically based. Biological determinism has not been very respectable intellectually for at least thirty years, but that should not lead us to underestimate its influence as a lay perspective.[10]

The therapy that goes most naturally with a heavy emphasis on biological determinism might be characterized as benign totalitarianism. There will be a heavy emphasis on the control of the activities of those who are biologically inferior since they obviously cannot judge best for themselves, and there will also be a strong emphasis on a caste-like social structure in which those who are marked as inferior are not allowed to weaken regular society by mating with it. From this perspective eugenics is an important applied therapy in the progressive weeding out of the inferior.

b) <u>The cultural relativistic perspective</u>. The other "natural" explanation of the situation of the disinherited could hardly be more different. Not only is there a disinterest in biological determinism, but it is asserted that the way of life of the disinherited is perfectly valid, equally as functional as that of regular society. While the disinherited may have troubles from their way of life, just as every way has its characteristic difficulties, they are socialized into appropriate behavior for their world just as regular persons are socialized into appropriate behavior for their world. The disinherited can be and are reasonably well-adjusted and happy within their world. They are neither inferior nor superior to regular society; they are just different. Their way of life has the same degree of organization and adaptiveness as has that of regular society. We are right in our initial perception that they are human, but we are wrong in our perception of the disinherited way of life, because we miss its inner coherence and validity.

The implications for action that flow from this view are less straightforward than in other cases because of the emphasis of cultural relativism on the inherent validity of each way of life. "Cultural pluralism" tends to be the main emphasis, a request that regular society recognize the imperatives and the values of the culture of the disinherited, that it not be stigmatized, that regular society "get off their backs." In the conservative version of this view it may be argued that really very little should be done in the way of special therapy, but that instead natural events should be allowed to run their course--if the disinherited want to buy into the regular society, they eventually will. A leftist view will hold that despite the validity of the way of life

of the disinherited, they do need resources of various kinds and will suggest a kind of "foreign aid" approach which turns over to the disinherited as a group certain kinds of resources which it will then use in whatever way seems appropriate given its cultural priorities rather than those of regular society. In its purest form, however, cultural relativism probably reinforces an emphasis on simply studying the disinherited, and tends to play down both the desirability and the possibility of regular society's doing anything about the situation in which the disinherited find themselves. The cultural relativist who also holds strong activist views will probably tend to be pushed in the direction of the next perspective, that of apotheosizing.

4. The Apotheosizing Perspective.--Here the initial perception of disinheritance is turned upside down and for that initial perception there is substituted the perception of a heroic adaptation. The central myth which informs this perspective is that of the "natural man" in a "natural world." The villain is civilization which has deprived and alienated members of regular society while leaving the disinherited free to be natural. In a more subdued version apotheosizing asserts at least that "We're just as bad as they are, maybe worse."

a) The natural man. From this perspective the disinherited are perceived as stronger, as a kind of supermen who have developed special capacities (rhythm!), special philosophies, a special quality of existential humanity which eschews the artificiality of regular society. In a somewhat less complimentary, though still highly romantic version,

the disinherited are seen as fortunately insensitive to pain and possessed of a natural self-assurance which allows them to stand the insult and derrogation to which regular society subjects them. There are many representations of natural man among the disinherited (indeed, the myth of the "natural man" seems difficult to sustain except where the hero is among the disinherited). The ballad of John Henry, the hustler and the blues singer, the cowboy, the stoic sharecropper, the macho Latin, the newly conscious black man--all of these provide convenient symbolic representations of such a perspective.

b) Heroic culture. When the emphasis shifts from the individuals involved to the social life of the group, the perspective tends to emphasize the heroic quality of the way of life of the disinherited. Heroic not just in the sense of being able to cope with adversity and still maintain life, but in the sense that as a result of adversity the disinherited have been able to create a way of life that has beauty and virtue. The disinherited are seen as having a good thing going for them. Despite the fact that they are exploited, despite the punishment regular society dishes out, they have succeeded in constructing a way of life that actually has more validity, is less alienated, than regular middle class society. Contrast to middle class society becomes important for this perspective--"Look at the pathology of the suburbs!" "Look at disintegration of the sense of community in middle class society!" In short, civilization thins the sense of both community and human individuality in regular society, but paradoxically this sense is alive in the community of the despised.

c) ~~Theory~~ Therapy. The most direct implication of these views involves the consumption of natural man and heroic culture as symbols, the enjoyment by regular folk of the superior inventions of the disinherited, whether these inventions be pizza, the hully-gully, or the cool way of life. Beyond consumption, the apotheosizing perspective is tailor-made for use in attacking the rest of the society. The disinherited are held up to the rest of society not as an example of its destructiveness and barbarity, but rather of its self-destructiveness, its artificiality, and its unreal and alienated way. Beyond these relatively passive uses of the apotheosizing perspective, it can become the core for an effort to create a new revolutionary man, to provide new hope for the old leftism and inspiration for a new radicalism. The apotheosized disinherited provide a source of human energy and creativity which can be organized to revitalize the total society because only among them does human meaning and vitality persist. There is no more lumpenproletariat, for among the disinherited lie the real proletariat who have not been co-opted and bought off by materialistic society. It is only necessary that the insightful members of regular society who perceive this throw in their lot with the disinherited, organize and manipulate them to provide a power base and an ideology for achieving the new society.

5. The Normalizing Perspective.--Finally, there is the perspective which resolves the initial perplexity and anxiety by the simplest mechanism possible--denial. Following Fred Davis, I mean by the normalizing perspective a process whereby the individual who seeks to understand

the situation of the disinherited "comes to view as normal and morally acceptable that which initially strikes him as odd, unnatural, 'crazy,' deviant, etc., irrespective of whether his perception was in the first instance reasonable, accurate, or justifiable."[11] In the normalizing perspective the initial perception of disinherited individuals and their way of life as unlivable is simply denied, treated as the result of processes of middle class projection and stereotyping. The disinherited are really just like you and me except perhaps that they are mistreated and poor, but these latter conditions do not result in other than superficial differences.

a) Ordinary people. In the normalizing perspective it is asserted that the disinherited share essentially the same hopes, wishes, goals, interests, joys and sorrows that everybody else does and that they express these in the same way. Further, they are just as law-abiding, self-controlled, sensitive, sensible, intelligent, as you and I. They are no more and no less than ordinary human beings, and their condition of disinheritance has only superficial impact on their personalities. They are deprived of the means to live in superficially conventional ways, that is, to have the same material goods, to participate socially in the same ways as the members of regular society. But, these deprivations do not have any fundamental impact on their personalities and their world views, or on their values. From this perspective, then, the null hypothesis reigns--that is, except for behavior and attitudes that are simple, direct and immediate responses to deprivation or prejudice, their views of life and their behavior are indistinguishable from those of others in the society.

b) An adequately coping way of life. With respect to the social life of the disinherited, as opposed to their individual characters, the normalizing perspective suggests that while it is true that the disinherited have a great many troubles and the rest of society imposes many penalties and punishments on them, nevertheless the disinherited somehow manage their situation in such a way that their interpersonal relations and their ways of coping with the world are not deeply affected. Thus, in this perspective the disinherited love their children and their kin; help each other out (perhaps more than members of regular society because it is necessary to do so); are reasonably well adjusted and happy in their social relations except that they have a realistic awareness of the problems that society makes for them. The anger that they may feel at their lot is simply healthy anger; it does not repercuss on their personalities or on the informal institutions of their day-to-day lives. In short, their lives are eminently livable, if somewhat restricted by lack of resources and barriers artifically imposed by the outside world.

c) Therapy. In many ways the major effect of the normalizing perspective is to debunk other perspectives by denying the validity of their various ways of conceptualizing the reality of the disinherited life. This is often done to ward off or argue against the policy implications of the other perspectives, either out of a sense of identification with the essential humanity of the disinherited, or (probably equally as common) out of a wish to do nothing and to underemphasize the deprivation and destruction that rejection from the conventional system involves.

In a more sophisticated way the normalizing perspective suggests therapies which emphasize "opportunity" rather than more radical alterations in the system. That is, it is argued that since the disinherited are really ordinary people who happen to be caught in an unfavorable situation for achieving their ordinary desires, it is necessary only to provide them with the ordinary means to the achievement of these desires--for example, with such things as job training programs, more thoughtful and seriously undertaken education programs to replace the poorly equipped and staffed schools which are available to them, perhaps some counseling to make them aware of the opportunities that are available to them in the larger world, etc. In other words, the intervention that is required is basically the fairly superficial one of providing realistic access to means of achieving the level of income and other kinds of functioning that are necessary to be a part of regular society. A good part of this will involve avoiding stereotyping the disinherited or in any way emphasizing what little may be different about their way of life and personal techniques for coping with their situation. In short, one wants to accentuate the positive both at the verbal level of the semantics of poverty and at the action level of making better coordinated and supported services and opportunities available.

Conclusion

Anyone who is well-acquainted with the literature on poverty and race problems in this country probably would have little difficulty ticking off a number of authors to fit each of these perspectives presented

above. However, for a number of reasons I have purposely avoided attaching specific authors to these views. Perhaps most important, almost none of the major writers on poverty and race could be neatly categorized as reflecting in pure type only one of these perspectives. By and large social scientists who seriously address the problems of race and poverty quickly become aware of the inadequacy of any one of these views. Therefore, what is distinctive about any one poverty or race expert is not so much the perspective to which he adheres as the particular combination of elements from different perspectives that his work represents. Perhaps equally important is the one or two perspectives which he most actively polemicizes <u>against</u>. Thus to try to neatly subsume writers in this area under each category would be unrealistic, particularly given the fact that poverty and race experts tend to be extremely prolific (in part because of the frequency of conferences like this at which they must present papers).

I have also tried to avoid any indication that one of these perspectives is the ~~current~~ correct one because it seems to me each one has an irrational core which can serve to distort an adequate understanding of the condition of disinherited people if pursued in too single-minded a way. But it should also be noted that (with the possible exception of biological determinism) each one of these perspectives has something to offer in coming to a rounded appreciation of the life of those who are in the position of the disinherited. I think it would not be at all difficult for the social scientist who has really intensive observational data from any one person in this group, or any one community of the disinherited, to find data which support each of these perspectives.

One attractive solution to the problem of discovering that some poor people fit one perspective while others fit another is to develop a typology which apportions poor people to one or another type--in my schema we could have the immoral, the sick, the mentally retarded, the subcultural practitioner, the hero and the normal. There may indeed be individuals who fit one of these perspectives not only at a given time but throughout their lives. However, I am much more impressed by the alterations in behavior and psychological state that poor people can go through as their situations change. The same individual can at one period of his life to all intents and purposes behave and feel like a conventional member of society, at another period seem the perfect example of the psychopathologically afflicted, and at another period seem content with a subculturally different existence. Finally, as Robert Coles has so sensitively shown, given particularly challenging circumstances, the disinherited child or adult can be truly heroic in ways that surprise and appall conventional people. For these reasons I suspect that the "typological solution" inevitably breaks down when we add a longitudinal dimension to our usual cross-sectional perspective.[12]

Finally, adherence to these perspectives either singly or in combination can very readily be found not only among social scientists and middle class and stable working class on-lookers but also among lower class people themselves. Indeed, a very interesting study could examine the question of the ethnodiagnosis of the condition of poverty by people who themselves are afflicted with that condition.

More broadly it should be noted that these five perspectives are probably basic categories of explanation for any problem in the way of life of a particular group. With some modifications this kind of schema could probably be applied to studying folk diagnoses of the situation of groups as different from the disinherited as business executives, the power elite, the artistically creative, the government bureaucrat. We are probably always confronted with the basic psychological issue of perplexity and anxiety which arise from trying to understand and account for the human condition. This issue comes to the fore when one concentrates on any particular group of human beings and discovers that his conception of what is human is so heavily personalized that he finds it difficult to empathize with the behavior of persons who are in notably different situations. It certainly would be true that the more conventional the group being studied, the more attractive will be the normalizing perspective unless one has a particular axe to grind. Nevertheless, I think it is also true that if one systematically surveyed the literature on exceptional groups in the society, whether they be exceptional by virtue of unusual achievement or (as in the case of the disinherited) lack of achievement, the issue of "They can't possibly be human in the way I am human," would come to the fore.

In the end we are confronted with a paradox--the effort to develop an understanding of the condition of the disinherited which will neutralize the perplexity and anxiety the observer experiences will, even when it is effective in accomplishing this goal, result in radical ambiguity in the rational task of developing an existentially grounded diagnosis

of the condition of that group. We can satisfy ourselves, and we can satisfy those who are eagerly awaiting a diagnosis that will somehow get them off the hook, by developing a well-done portrait along the lines of some one of these perspectives. However, to anyone who looks closely we inevitably leave ambiguities because no one perspective can fully capture the complexity of life of the people in whom we are interested. I think these ambiguities can be tolerated as long as we are dealing with the scientific level of the problem. After all, we really are not at the point where we can expect social scientific explanations that resolve all issues and neatly package reality.

On the other hand, once one moves over into the question of policy these ambiguities become crucial because each perspective tends to encourage certain kinds of policy choices. Depending on how adequately the perspective copes with the reality of the disinherited those policy choices may prove successful or unsuccessful. It would be my view that the perspectives that have proved dominant in the formulation of the current war on poverty have been the less powerful ones and that the policies that have been derived from social science research have been by and large the wrong ones.[13] Perhaps it is at this point that we need to be more flexible in the connection we make between diagnoses and policy prescriptions, or perhaps simply more profound. Perhaps we need to take our diagnoses a great deal more seriously than we do.

I do not think anyone studies the behavior of the disinherited out of solely scientific reasons, although there certainly is a wide range in the degree to which researchers are interested in an immediate

policy follow through. For the basic science goals, but even more for the policy goals, it seems to me that we have to somehow go beyond development of understandings that do an effective job of neutralizing perceptions that make us (and everybody else) very nervous. We must strive first for a phenomenologically valid account of both the inner reality of personal life and of the social exchanges which constitute the pattern of social life of the disinherited. We must learn to become much more precise about how such inner reality and ways of life came into being historically and about how they are sustained by the larger social system in which they are embedded. The very gross paradigms that these five perspectives bring to bear can be useful in accomplishing this task if they are taken as starting points rather than as resolutions to the scientific and the policy problems.

But we will discover that a phenomenologically accurate account of the condition of the disinherited will make us and those who read us even more nervous because the more accurate the account, the more it will heighten, at least initially, the deeply human perception that "They cannot live like that because I could not live like that." Anyone who doubts that phenomenologically accurate analyses of human behavior heighten rather than reduce anxiety need only read the works of Erving Goffman, Harold Garfinkel and their students.

Such accounts will inevitably present the social scientists and policy makers with what Alvin Gouldner has called "hostile information," that is, information that challenges their deepest held beliefs about what people are like, why they act as they do, and what this implies

for political action.[14] Yet if we are to provide a satisfactory intellectual grounding for systematic policy making in this area, we must somehow achieve such a complexly accurate diagnosis rather than merely a satisfying and anxiety reducing one.

FOOTNOTES

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[2]Edwin M. Lemert, Human Deviance, Social Problems and Social Control (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1967).

[3]David Matza, "The Disreputable Poor," Class, Status and Power, ed. Reinhard Bendix and Seymour M. Lipset (2d. ed. New York: Free Press, 1966).

[4]Bernard Beck, "Welfare as a Moral Category," Social Problems, XIV, No. 3 (Winter, 1966), pp. 258-277; see the related articles by Georg Simmel, "The Poor," and Lewis A. Coser, "The Sociology of Poverty," Social Problems, XIII, No. 2 (Fall, 1965), pp. 118-140, 140-148.

[5]For example, George Fitzhugh, Sociology for the South or the Failure of Free Society (Richmond, Virginia: A. Morris, Publisher, 1954); Albert Taylor Bledsoe, An Essay on Liberty and Slavery (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott & Co., 1856); E. N. Elliott (ed.), Cotton is King, And Pro-slavery Arguments (Augusta, Georgia: Pritchard, Abbott and Loomis, 1860); A. H. Shannon, Racial Integrity and Other Features of the Negro Problem (Nashville, Tennessee: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1907); and Thomas Pearce Bailey, Race Orthodoxy in the South and Other Aspects of the Negro Question (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1914).

[6]The salience of anxiety in common sense perspectives on poverty and on Negroes was most clearly apparent to me in several anonymous telephone calls I received some months ago, after being quoted in a St. Louis newspaper about the employment problems of lower class Negro men in connection with the newspaper's background article on a proposal before the Missouri Legislature to provide for AFDC-U payments. In my remarks I had emphasized the desire of lower class men to support their families, but had indicated the many ways in which economic and social arrangements interfere with the realization of this desire. Each of the white callers said that I was wrong, that their own intimate knowledge of lower class Negroes indicated that the men were simply lazy and disinterested in supporting their families. Although all of the callers seemed reasonably sane, I was struck by the fact that they

expressed anxiety more than anger in their conversations, that my remarks seemed to literally disorient them in connection with their views about this group, and that they were almost pleading with me to admit that I was wrong so they might relax in the knowledge that their views were indeed valid.

[7]For a case study in which this kind of situation seems to obtain see Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1967).

[8]See Joyce Ladner, "A Study of 'Black Power' in Mississippi," presented at the American Sociological Association meetings, August, 1967.

[9]For example, the current widespread interest in federal crime control and juvenile delinquency control activities can be seen as in part a political response to a moralistic critique of the "give-away" poverty and race programs.

[10]It is interesting that some genetic and some social scientists are very tentatively seeking to raise again as a scientific problem the question of genetically based differences in intelligence in relation to lower status positions (but not with reference to racial groups for reasons that are too technical to note here). See, for example, Bruce K. Eckland, "Genetics and Sociology: A Reconsideration," American Sociological Review (April, 1967), pp. 173 ff. and the references found there.

[11]Fred Davis, "Deviance Disavowal: The Management of Strained Interaction by the Visably Handicapped," The Other Side, ed. Howard S. Becker (New York: Free Press, 1964).

[12]From my own efforts to resolve some of the contradictory impressions one gains from data about lower class living patterns, see Lee Rainwater, "The Problem of Lower Class Culture," Department of Sociology Colloquium, University of Wisconsin, September, 1966.

[13]Lee Rainwater, "The Lessons of Pruitt-Igoe," The Public Interest, (Summer, 1967) and Lee Rainwater, "Policy Research, Applied Research and Lower Class Culture," presented at 26th Annual Meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Washington, D. C., May 5-7th, 1967.

[14]Alvin W. Gouldner, Enter Plato (New York: Basic Books, 1966).